Teacher Preparation and Certification Proposals N.J.A.C. 6A:9, Professional Standards; N.J.A.C. 6A:9B, State Board of Examiners and Certification.

> Testimony Presented to NJ State Board of Education Assistant Executive Director Jackie Burke April 17, 2019

Good afternoon. My name is Jackie Burke and I am the Assistant Executive Director of the NJ Council of County Vocational-Technical Schools, which represents New Jersey's 21 county vocational-technical school districts serving approximately 33,000 secondary students. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about proposed changes to the professional standards and certification requirements for career and technical education teachers.

As the Department of Education stated at the March State Board of Education meeting, New Jersey is facing a significant shortage of CTE teachers. This shortage has a direct effect on the ability of county vocational-technical school districts to fulfill their mission to provide high quality CTE programs for students who wish to pursue a career focused education.

Unfortunately, this struggle to recruit qualified teachers will only increase as many teachers are approaching retirement age. The inability of a school district to fill vacant or new positions has already forced districts to consider closing programs or not open new programs in high-demand fields.

The most important factor for CTE teacher success is industry experience. When an opening arises for a CTE teacher, districts typically recruit directly from industry, and then support the best candidate through the alternate route training and certification process. Regrettably, the significant increase in the time required for alternate route training enacted in 2015 along with other regulatory changes and the improving economy greatly exacerbated recruitment difficulties.

The Council of County Vocational-Technical schools greatly appreciates the Department's recognition of these difficulties and the regulatory changes they have proposed to ease some of the restrictive eligibility requirements. We also appreciate their efforts to engage in working groups with our districts to continue the dialogue and address non-regulatory barriers to teacher recruitment.

The proposed code changes are a welcome first step toward increasing the pool of eligible candidates. For example, eliminating the current restrictions on considering a candidate's work experience beyond the past 10 years and recognizing teaching

experience in the specific industry to count toward work experience will allow the districts to recruit highly qualified individuals who were previously ineligible.

The proposed rules will also recognize degrees earned at nationally accredited technical institutes, as well as a coherent sequence of 30 credits in an industry discipline as eligible for degree-based certification. This will make more well-qualified candidates eligible for CTE certification, such as a math major with 30 credits in computer science teaching cybersecurity. The Council is hopeful that the Department will continue to work with schools across the state to address some of the remaining barriers to hiring high quality CTE teachers. The extended training time and expense for alternate route teachers as well as the difficulties some of our second-career candidates face passing the math and writing portions of the PRAXIS exam remain significant problems.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of New Jersey's county vocational-technical schools.